

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 LUSAKA 00625 281559Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----063724 281612Z /40

O P 281435Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7719
INFO AMCONSUL CAPETOWN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY GABORONE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
PRIORITY 2659
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T LUSAKA 0625

EXDIS

CAPETOWN FOR EMBASSY

USUN FOR AMB YOUNG

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PDEV RH UK
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: US-UK RELATIONSHIP

REF: (A) STATE 049706, (B) STATE 050906

1. EVENTS ARE MOVING SO RAPIDLY THAT IT IS DIFFICULT
TO KEEP UP WITH THEM FROM THIS DISTANCE. WE ARE GETTING
THE IMPRESSION BOTH FROM CLASSIFIED TRAFFIC AND PUBLIC
STATEMENTS THAT A BASIC CHANGE IS OCCURING AND WE ARE
CONCERNED THAT IN THE PROCESS WE ARE EXPOSING OURSELVES

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TO CRITICISM WHICH WILL AFFECT OUR CREDIBILITY AND LESSEN
THE INFLUENCE WE CAN BRING TO BEAR AT A LATER DATE.

2. WE AGREED TO PARTICIPATE WITH THE BRITISH ON A SPECIFIC
PLAN TO ACHIEVE A SETTLEMENT IN RHODESIA; NOT TO COOPERATE
WITH THEM IN ALL EFFORTS TO FIND A SOLUTION TO THE RHODESIAN
PROBLEM. THE INITIATIVE ON WHICH WE EMBARKED LAST APRIL

APPEARS TO BE COMING TO AN END. WE NEED TO CONSIDER WHETHER WE SHOULD EXTEND THE PARTNERSHIP TO THE EFFORT TO SHAPE AN INTERNAL SETTLEMENT OR SIMPLY STAND WITH THEM ON THE AAP.

3. THE AAP IS COMING TO AN END BECAUSE, UNLESS WE ARE ACTUALLY WILLING TO SIT DOWN AND TALK TO THE PF ABOUT TERMS OF THE AAP, GENERAL STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT FOR IT WILL APPEAR TO BE LIP SERVICE ONLY. IN THIS SENSE, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE TALKING POINTS PROPOSED TO THE BRITISH (REFTEL A) GO FAR ENOUGH SINCE THEY DO NOT SPECIALLY SAY (AND MEAN) THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO ENTER NEGOTIATIONS PROMPTLY IF THE PF IS WILLING TO ACCEPT THE PRINCIPLES WE HAVE SET OUT GOVERNING THE TRANSITION PERIOD.

4. AT THE SAME TIME, IT LOOKS FROM HERE LIKE WE ARE PREPARING TO ENTER INTO A PROCESS OF NEGOTIATION WITH THE INTERNAL NATIONALISTS TO SHAPE A SETTLEMENT WHICH COULD BE INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTABLE. WHILE WE ARE NOT PROPOSING TO GIVE THEM A COMMITMENT, OUR SUPPORT IS CERTAINLY IMPLIED IF THEY CAN WREST FROM SMITH THE KIND OF AGREEMENT WHICH WE ARE OUTLINING TO MUZOREWA AND THE SOUTH AFRICANS. PUBLICLY THE PRESS AND RADIO HERE ARE FULL OF SMITH'S STATEMENT THAT OWEN PROMISED IN LONDON TO SUPPORT THE INTERNAL OPTION PROVIDED THERE WAS A REFERENDUM OF THE BLACK POPULATION, SMITH DID NOT HEAD THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT, AND IT CONTAINED A BLACK MAJORITY OF MINISTERS.
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THE IMPRESSION HAS BEEN GIVEN AND IS BEING WIDELY ACCEPTED HERE THAT THE BRITISH ARE NOW WORKING WITH THE PARTICIPANTS TO FASHION AN ACCEPTABLE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT.

5. ON THE BASIS OF INSTRUCTIONS CONTAINED REFTTEL B, WE BELIEVE THAT VERY SHORTLY MUZOREWA AND SMITH WILL DECLARE THAT THEY HAVE ASSURANCES FROM THE U.S. AND UK OF SUPPORT FOR AN INTERNAL SETTLEMENT PROVIDING SOME GENERAL CONDITIONS ARE MET.

6. WE HAVE NEVER BELIEVED THAT THE ONLY WAY TO SETTLE THE RHODESIA PROBLEM IS THROUGH THE AAP AND ACCEPT THAT THE DAY MAY COME WHEN IT WOULD BE ADVISABLE TO THROW OUR WEIGHT BEHIND AN INTERNAL SETTLEMENT. WE MIGHT EVEN CONCEDE THAT THERE ARE ARGUMENTS FOR THE BRITISH TRYING TO SHAPE SUCH A SETTLEMENT NOW WHILE THEY CAN HAVE AN INFLUENCE IN THE MATTER.

7. FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, HOWEVER, THE ADVANTAGES OF PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BRITISH IN DEVELOPING OUR SEPTEMBER 1 PROPOSAL DO NOT NECESSARILY EXTEND TO THE VERY DIFFERENT INITIATIVE ON WHICH THEY ARE NOW EMBARKING. IN OUR VIEW,

THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH WE COULD CONTINUE ENGAGING WITH THE
BRITISH IN DISCUSSIONS WITH MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE WOULD BE
IF WE WERE GENUINELY WILLING TO DO THE SAME WITH THE PF ON
THE AAP. IF WE ARE HESITANT ABOUT ENTERING INTO SUCH
DISCUSSIONS SOON (AND WE ACCEPT THERE MAY BE VERY GOOD
REASONS FOR SUCH HESITANCY), THEN WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD
NOT JOIN THE BRITISH IN DISCUSSINS WITH MUZOREWA AND
SITHOLE ON HOW TO SHAPE AN ACEPTABLE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT.
THE FL LEADERS WILL NOT BE EASILY MISLED. THEY WILL CRITICIZE A
"HOLDING ACTION" ON THE AAP PAIRED WITH ACTIVE MEETINGS
WITH THE INTERNAL NATIONALIST.
IF THEY JUDGE THAT ARE LOSING HEART IN SUPPORT OF
THE AAP AND AT THE SAME TIME
JOINING WITH THE BRITISH IN DISCUSSING AN ACCEPTABLE INTERNAL
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SETTLEMENT, THEY WILL REACT STRONGLY. WE BELIEVE WE WILL
QUICKLY LOSE THEIR CONFIDENCE IN US AND WE WILL FORFEIT THE
INFLUENCE WHICH WE HAVE BUILT UP OVER THE LAST YEAR.

8. IF, THEN, PROGRESS IS MADE TOWARDS A SATISFACTORY INTERNAL
SETTLEMENT, WE WILL AT A LATER DATE BE LESS ABLE TO BE OF
ASSISTANCE IN BRINGING THE PARTIES TOGETHER THAN WE WOULD
HAVE BEEN HAD WE STAYED ALOOF FROM BRITISH EFFORTS TO SHAPE
THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT AND MAINTAINED OUR TIES WITH THE FL,
NIGERIANS AND OTHER BLACK AFRICANS.

9. I CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT WE ARE PROBABLY A LONG WAY
FROM A SETTLEMENT IN SALISBURY. SMITH WILL HOLD OUT ADAMANTLY
FOR A MAXIMUM POSITION FOR HIMSELF AND THE WHITE COMMUNITY,
WHILE MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE WILL REALIZE THAT THEY CANNOT
SUCCEED WITHOUT SOME MAJOR CONCESSIONS FROM HIM. AS WITH
OUR OWN INITIATIVE, THE FINAL DECISION MAY BE UP TO THE
SOUTH AFRICANS. ONLY THEY WILL BE IN A POSITION EVENTUALLY
TO FORCE SMITH TO ACCEPT SOMETHING WHICH MUZOREWA, SITHOLE
AND PRESUMABLY THE BRITISH CAN LIVE WITH. AT THAT POINT
OUR INFLUENCE WITH SOUTH AFRICA WOULD BE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT.
IF WE HAVE PRESERVED OUR TIES WITH THE FL AND OTHER BLACK
AFRICANS, WE WILL BE ABLE TO SPEAK WITH THE SOUTH AFRICANS
WITH AUTHORITY. SIMILARLY, IF WE HAVE NOT YET COMMITTED
OURSELVES TO THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT PROCESS, WE CAN OFFER
SOMETHING WHICH WILL BE OF GREAT VALUE THEN. THUS IT SEEMS
TO US THAT WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO PROVIDE THE CLINCHER NECESSARY
TO BRING SOUTH AFRICAN WEIGHT AGAINST SMITH IF WE STAY OUT
OF THE PROCESS AT THIS STAGE. HOWEVER, IF WE HAVE SIMPLY
BACKED THE BRITISH THROUGH THEIR SWITCH FROM THE AAP TO
SALISBURY, WE WILL HAVE LESS AUTHORITY TO DO SO.

10. I RECOGNIZE THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO DO,BUT AT
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THIS STAGE, AND FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT, IT APPEARS THAT
WE WOULD BE BETTER OFF DISTANCING OURSELVES FROM THE BRITISH
AND LETTING THEM DELIVER THE TALKING POINTS TO MUZOREWA.
SO FAR AS THE DEMARCHES TO THEIKL PRESIDENTS GO, I BELIEVE
THEY SHOULD BE MADE SEPARATELY, THOUGH WE MIGHT AGREE ON
THE BASIS TALKING POINTS. IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES,
I AM AFRAID THE DEMARCHES WILL RAPIDLY DETERIORATE INTO
RECRIMINATIONS AGAINST THE BRITISH IN WHICH WE WILL SHARE--
UNLESS, AS I SAY, WE ARE PREPARED TO AGREE TO SAY THAT WE
ARE WILLING TO BEGIN MEETINGS RIGHT AWAY WITH THE PF.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, AGREEMENTS, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LUSAKA00625
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780091-1217
Format: TEL
From: LUSAKA
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978024/aaaaaday.tel
Line Count: 186
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: b7dca2d4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 STATE 49706, 78 STATE 50906
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3556687
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RHODESIA: US-UK RELATIONSHIP
TAGS: PDEV, PORG, RH, UK, US, (MUZOREWA, ABEL), (SITHOLE, NDABANINGI), (SMITH, IAN), (NKOMO, JOSHUA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b7dca2d4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014